851 Baptism is usually a big feast
795 celebrated at home some weeks after the birth
of the child, with relatives and friends attending.
The next big celebration in a young person's
life is his confirmation day, a time of presents
585 and gay parties. Weddings used to be the biggest
369 of all celebrations, which in the country often
lasted for several days, sometimes even as
long as a week. Weddings in urban communities
764 are usually one-day affairs. Funerals were
also a time for large gatherings, but the time was
spent mainly in quiet conversation.

527 One of the nationally celebrated holidays is
St. John Day's Eve (jaani-laupäev), June 23rd,
famed in all northern countries as the midsummer
(equinox) holiday. The romantic traditions of
this night are still kept alive in the countryside
and many townspeople go out to celebrate it.
Barrels stuffed with lumber and tar are placed

200 abolished.

795] There was no established church in independ-
798 ent Estonia. Full freedom of worship and conscience was guaranteed in the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia. All religious services were free to be held so long as they did not conflict with public order and morale.

162 According to the census of 1922, 78.3 per cent
795 of the population of Estonia was Lutheran, 19 per cent Greek Catholic, 0.5 per cent Baptist, 0.2 per cent Roman Catholic, 1 per cent belonged to other Christian churches (Methodist, Adventist, etc.) and 0.4 per cent was Jewish. To the Lutheran Church in Estonia belonged Estonians, Germans, and Swedes, whereas the membership of the Greek Orthodox Church was made up mainly of Russians and Estonians. The distribution of Lutherans by districts was almost

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162 even except in Setumaa, Saaremaa and Pärnumaa.
795 The Greek Orthodox Church in these districts had the following figures: in Setumaa 90.9 per cent; in Saaremaa 39.7 per cent; and in Pärnumaa 31.5 per cent.

795 Before the independence of Estonia the Lutheran Church was administered according to the Statute of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia, sanctioned in 1832 by Czar Nicholas I, and based on the Swedish Church Statute introduced in 1692 and in Livonia in 1694. From the [565] point of view of organization, the Lutheran Church in preindependence times was an established Church because the large landowners and state officials had the decisive power. The Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church accepted its constitution in 1919 at the second Church Congress at Tallinn. According to this

●795 constitution the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church was a free people's church, an autonomous body administering itself and possessing the rights of a juridical person.

The primary unit of the Church was the individual congregation. As a rule, the congregations in Estonia were larger than in America: 10,000 members in cities was a common size. The congregation was administered by an assembly, comprising all adult members who had been confirmed and had paid their church fees. The assembly was the highest authority in all more important matter of the Church. It elected the congregational council, which managed the financial affairs of the congregation and helped the pastor in his parish work. The executive board of the congregation, elected by and from among the congregation council, was the

795 executive organ of the congregation.

The next higher unit was the dean's district, to which belonged several congregations. All the dean's districts together formed the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, which was administered by the following organs: 1) the Bishop; 2) the Church Diet, which convened annually and was the highest administrative organ in the Church, election of the Bishop being one of its responsibilities; and 3) the Consistory, consisting of the Bishop as president, a secular vice-president, and an equal number of ecclesiastical and secular assessors, all elected by the Church Diet.

The responsibility of the Conference of Theologians, comprising all ministers and theologians with a university education, was to take care of the education of ministers and of the

795 ecclesiastical problems within the Church.

In 1935 the new Church Constitution provided for some changes which were aimed at centralization.

659 The relations between Church and State were regulated in the 1920 Estonian Constitution where the separation of State and Church was estab-

[874] lished. The Theological Faculty, as well as a [795] special chair for Greek Orthodox theology at Tartu University, the institution which trained the ministers, was maintained by the State. For country congregations the State granted a certain amount of land which was farmed mainly by the pastors.

871 In the beginning years of the Republic of Estonia religious instruction was excluded from public schools. By means of the 1923 referendum it was reintroduced again by an

871 overwhelming majority of votes. After this there were, as a rule, two religion instructors in the schools-- Lutheran and Greek Orthodox-- and classes were held once or twice a week. Because of religious instruction in the schools the congregations did not run Sunday schools, at least not so extensively as is done in America.

795 The Greek Catholic Church had a similar administration. The congregations formed the Estonian Apostles' Orthodox Church, the highest administrator of which was the Head Bishop, who in 1923 received from the Patriarch of Constantinople the title of Metropolitan. The executive board of the Church was the Synod, comprising ecclesiastical and secular members. The Synod and the Metropolitan were elected by the Church Diet. The Russian congregations of

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795 Estonia formed a Russian Bishop's District, which elected its own Bishop, the election being confirmed by the Greek Orthodox Church Diet.

In 1940 there were 170 Evangelical Lutheran congregations in Estonia (52 of them established during the independence period) which were organized into 16 Dean's Districts. The German Dean's District was liquidated in 1939 when the

[346] Germans returned to Germany. There were 195 Lutheran churches, 15 of them built in independence times. Some of the churches are several hundred years old, beautiful architecturally and containing valuable altar paintings. The Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church in

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795 1937 had 851,060 members, 272,340 of whom paid their church fees regularly.

In the Greek Orthodox Church there were 212,764 members in 1934, the number of congregations being 158. Fifteen new churches were [874] [795] built during independence. For training of the priests a Greek Orthodox seminary was founded in the monastery of Petseri in 1933; higher education was given as before at Tartu University.

798 Relations between the different denominational churches in the Republic of Estonia were generally good and the Estonian people, being liberal in religious matters, had no serious differences among themselves or with other nationalities on religious grounds. The Estonians maintained amicable relations and cooperation also with the peoples of non-Christian faiths, the most numerous being the Jews.

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298 793 at the present time are revised before pastors are allowed to deliver them and for ceremonies like weddings, christenings, funerals, and the like, the people must pay enormous taxes to the State, which average two to three months of a worker's salary.

659 795 The Estonian Orthodox Church was subjected to the Moscow patriarch in 1941. This supremacy was repudiated during the Nazi occupation, but was imposed again in 1945. The buildings which belonged to the churches were nationalized as well as the lands in the country owned by the churches, and even the cemeteries. For each square meter of their living quarters the pastors reportedly have to pay twenty times more than a worker does. Also, the congregations have to pay for their churches an exorbitant fee to the State. It is rumored also that the churches

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795 659 have to pay ten times more than a worker does for electricity, and for this reason the services [626] are often conducted in the dark. Furthermore, in order to deter churchgoers, the Communists reportedly arranged to have compulsory work on Sundays and have tried to keep records of the worshippers. Young people under 18 years of age are not allowed any religious education.

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Annex "A" Subparagraph 1k,

Sociological Background

RELIGION

771
795 The Votes are Greek Orthodox, just like the Russians and their close relatives, the Ingrians. Until the revolution of 1917, they stuck faithfully to their religious customs. But under the Bolshevist rule, only the older generation has continued the old religious practices, whereas the youth has become indifferent to the religion.

[186] The devotion to Greek Orthodoxy has brought the Votes nearer to the Russians and to the Ingrians, at the same time alienating them from the Finns, who are Lutherans. One indication of this may be seen in the fact that, at least during the czarist rule, the Votes normally did not marry Finns, but they would intermarry with the Russians and the Ingrians.

771 The Votes, although being ardent Orthodox,
798 have, nevertheless not gotten completely rid of their ancient heathenism. We know very little of the Votes' ancient religion, and all we know refers to the worship of holy trees and springs. There were up to most recent times some trees or groves in Votic villages which were considered sacred. One such grove, surrounded by a high fence, was to be found in Baabina village. Although it was known by the name "Elijah's Birch," actually mainly aspens
796 grew there. Each year on Elijah's Day the village people used to go to the grove to celebrate there a festival. The people remember that in older times an ox was sacrificed

3: Indiana U. S-4, 5 1955 RG4 Estonia RG4
Vepses

Annex "A," Subparagraph 1k,

Sociological Background

RELIGION

795 781 771 The Vepsians are officially Greek Catholic. The influence of the Church has been, however, very superficial, limited mainly to the observance of formalities, such as the sign of the cross, bowing down to the floor, and so on. Under such conditions the old, heathen beliefs have had an excellent chance to survive among the Vepsians up to the present day. Sometimes certain features of the Christian religion have been mixed with superstitions. Thus a Vepsian family, for instance, was afraid of breaking the fasts for fear that this might cause the sickness of a cow or another animal.

776 The Vepsian heathen religion is based on a belief in spirits. The dwelling house and all other buildings have their protective spirits, called "masters" and "mistresses." Such are pert-izhand 'master of the hut,' lavan izhand 'master of the cow-shed,' lavan emag 'mistress of the cow-shed,' külbetin izhand 'master of the bathhouse,' gomnan izhand 'master of the kiln,' and gomnan emag 'mistress of the kiln,' etc.; the two last-mentioned are called also rigibukoo and rigibab, respectively. Entering the bathhouse, the people bow toward each corner and ask a

Annex "A," Subparagraph 1k,
Sociological Background

RELIGION

795 The Livonians are mainly Lutherans. They were converted to Christianity 700 years ago by the German knights who used fire and sword to convince them. Lutheranism also was spread among them by the Germans. In later times other denominations have appeared along the Livonian coast. There are a few hundred converts to Greek Orthodoxy who yielded to the enticements of the Russians in the last century. The Baptist doctrine has also spread among them.

There are three Lutheran churches on the Livonian coast, in Ire, Piza and Kuolka. The Lutheran pastor, a Latvian, lives in Ire and preaches in all three churches. The only Orthodox church is to be found in Kuolka. The Baptists have two chapels in Iira and Pitrog and several preachers.

771 The Livonians have not been able to comprehend fully the Christian religion. They can understand only the religious fairy tales and the legends of the Bible, such as the horrors of Doomsday and burning in hellfire. Some of them interpret the Bible in a special way. Loorits tells of an old man who, because of the casual similarity between the names in the Bible and certain Estonian names,

771 assumed that Estonian was the first language of the world, and that Adam and Eva were Estonians. He was venerated by the women almost as a prophet. Characteristic of the religious fanaticism of the Livonians is the following event which took place in Pitrõg in the winter of 1920. A group of devout believers decided, after they had destroyed their mundane property, to travel to heaven. For this purpose they gathered in ardent prayer to a "holy" man to wait for the cloud which would take them from this shore of misery to better pastures. Although several dates were set for their travel to heaven, nothing came of it. Finally the people began to accuse their leader of being a devil instead of a holy man.

795 771 The influence of the Baptist sect is stronger among the Livonians than that of the established church. This sect is flourishing in several villages, such as Iira, Uushkila, Siikrõg, Pitrõg, etc. The Baptists have followed in practice the principle of self-improvement and brotherly love, and this may have influenced the high level of honesty still to be found among the Livonians. But the sect of the Baptists has also had its negative influence. The believers emphasize too much external formality and celebrate Sunday in the most extreme way.

771 In addition to the church religion, there exists among the Livonians a heathen religion also, which officially is condemned. This